

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/P:GFSHERMAN:TH
APPROVED BY NEA:ALATHERTON, JR.
S/S - LMACFARLANE

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO USDEL SECRETARY IMMEDIATE

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FOR THE SECRETARY FROM ASST SECRETARY ATHERTON

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:OVIP (ATHERTON, ALFRED L., JR.)

SUBJECT: ACTION MEMORANDUM: PRESS GUIDANCE FOR ASSISTANT
SECRETARY ATHERTON'S VISITS TO MOROCCO AND ALGERIA
(S/S NO.7603770)

1. THE PROBLEM. PRESS GUIDANCE IS NEEDED FOR MY VISITS
TO MOROCCO AND ALGERIA, TO BE USED HERE BY DEPARTMENT AND
BY MYSELF ALONG THE ROUTE (ONLY IN RESPONSE TO PRESS
QUERIES). I PROPOSE THE FOLLOWING:

2. Q. WHY IS ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON VISITING
MOROCCO (ALGERIA) AT THIS TIME?

A. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON IS JOINING UNDER SECRETARY
FOR ECONOMIC AFFAIRS ROBINSON ON THE UNDER SECRETARY'S
LONG-SCHEDULED VISIT TO ALGIERS ON ECONOMIC MATTERS
(FEBRUARY 28). THIS SEEMS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR ONE OF
OUR PERIODIC REVIEWS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF ALGERIA OF A
WHOLE RANGE OF MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST, INCLUDING
BILATERAL RELATIONS, UNITED STATES ON-GOING EFFORTS FOR
PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST, AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENTS SUCH
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AS THE SAHARA SITUATION. THE SECRETARY THOUGHT IT WOULD

BE USEFUL ALSO FOR MR. ATHERTON TO STOP IN MOROCCO FOR A SIMILAR EXCHANGE, GIVEN OUR LONG-STANDING AND CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF MOROCCO. AS YOU KNOW,

WE HAVE IMPORTANT RELATIONS WITH BOTH THESE COUNTRIES, AND IT HAS BEEN OUR HABIT TO REVIEW PERIODICALLY MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST WITH BOTH. WE ARE PLEASED THAT BOTH GOVERNMENTS SAID THEY WOULD WELCOME MR. ATHERTON'S VISIT.

3. Q. DOES THE VISIT AT THIS TIME TO THESE TWO PARTICULAR COUNTRIES MEAN THE UNITED STATES IS UNDERTAKING A MEDIATION ROLE IN THE SAHARAN DISPUTE?

A. NO. THE TIMING OF MR. ATHERTON'S TRIP IS KEYED TO THE VISIT TO ALGERIA PLANNED BY UNDER SECRETARY ROBINSON FOR SOME TIME. WHILE BOTH GOVERNMENTS (ALGERIA AND MOROCCO) WILL PRESUMABLY WANT TO DISCUSS THE SAHARAN SITUATION AS PART OF OUR BROAD EXCHANGES WITH BOTH, WE DO NOT ENVISAGE A ROLE FOR THE UNITED STATES IN THIS MATTER. OUR POSITION REMAINS THAT THIS IS A MATTER FOR NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS CONCERNED WITHIN THEIR REGIONAL CONTEXT AND WITHOUT OUTSIDE INTERVENTION OR INTERFERENCE, WITHIN THE APPROPRIATE UN FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED BY THE DECEMBER 10 UNGA RESOLUTION WE SUPPORTED.

4. Q. WHY IS ATHERTON VISITING THESE TWO COUNTRIES ONLY--THE UNITED STATES ALSO HAS GOOD RELATIONS WITH TUNISIA. WHY NOT GO THERE ALSO?

A. I HAVE TOLD YOU THAT MR. ATHERTON'S TRIP IS KEYED TO THE UNDER SECRETARY'S LONG-PLANNED VISIT TO ALGIERS. IN THE LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE, THE SECRETARY ASKED HIM ALSO TO GO TO MOROCCO BRIEFLY. THAT IS ALL THERE IS TO SAY ON THE SUBJECT, AND YOU SHOULD NOT READ ANYTHING MORE INTO THE VISITS, OR INTO THE OMISSION OF OTHER COUNTRIES.

5. IF QUESTIONS ARISE ON OUR NEW PROPOSALS TO SELL MORE F5'S AND OTHER MILITARY EQUIPMENT TO MOROCCO, NOW BEFORE CONGRESS, I PROPOSE TO USE THE FOLLOWING PRESS GUIDANCE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PREPARED FOR THE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN TODAY. (NO QUESTIONS WERE ASKED AT THE NOON BRIEFING);

Q. DOES THE NEW U.S. PROPOSAL TO SELL 24 F5E'S AND OTHER EQUIPMENT TO MOROCCO SIGNIFY A "TILT" TOWARD MOROCCO IN THE MOROCCAN-ALGERIAN CONTEST OVER THE SPANISH SAHARA? WOULD THE U.S. BE PREPARED TO HELP MOROCCO IN CASE OF A WAR?

A. FIRST OF ALL, THE FACTS ARE THESE: THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE HAS TRANSMITTED TO CONGRESS, AS REQUIRED BY LAW, TWO LETTERS OF OFFER CONCERNING THE PROPOSED SALE TO

MOROCCO OF CERTAIN AIR FORCE EQUIPMENT WORTH 112 MILLION DOLLARS AND CERTAIN ARMY EQUIPMENT VALUED AT 47 MILLION DOLLARS. THE DETAILS OF THESE TRANSACTIONS, PROVIDED TO CONGRESS, ARE CLASSIFIED INFORMATION. I WOULD LIKE TO STRESS, HOWEVER, THAT BOTH TRANSACTIONS, AS WELL AS THE PROPOSED 30 MILLION DOLLARS IN FOREIGN MILITARY SALE CREDITS FOR MOROCCO IN THE PRESIDENT'S FY 76 BUDGET, ARE PART OF OUR LONGSTANDING MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO DATING BACK TO 1960. OVER TWO YEARS AGO WE AGREED TO HELP MOROCCO IN MODERNIZING ITS ARMED FORCES, AND THESE TRANSACTIONS FORM PART OF THAT AGREEMENT.

NOW, AS TO YOUR QUESTION ABOUT THE SPANISH SAHARA DISPUTE, AS I HAVE SAID, OUR POLICY IS TO ENCOURAGE A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION AMONG THE PARTIES, AND I CANNOT ADDRESS HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS ABOUT WHAT UNITED STATES POLICY WOULD BE IN THE EVENT OF HOSTILITIES. SUFFICE IT TO SAY, WE VALUE OUR RELATIONSHIPS WITH ALL THE PARTIES CONCERNED. WE ALSO BELIEVE IT IS ENCUMBENT ON OUTSIDE POWERS NOT TO EXPLOIT THEIR NORMAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE AREA IN WAYS WHICH INCREASE TENSIONS AND DISRUPT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. WE BELIEVE THIS PROBLEM SHOULD BE DEALT WITH IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT.

6. Q. THEN YOU ARE SAYING THAT THE PROPOSED SALE OF THESE WEAPONS WILL NOT INCREASE TENSIONS AND DISRUPT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT?
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A. I AM SAYING THAT THESE PROPOSED TRANSACTIONS ARE PART OF AN ONGOING PROGRAM INAUGURATED OVER TWO YEARS AGO, AS PART OF OUR LONGSTANDING MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP WITH MOROCCO. THEY SHOULD NOT BE JUDGED IN ANY CONTEXT OTHER THAN OUR LONGSTANDING FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH MOROCCO.

7. RECOMMENDATION: THAT YOU APPROVE USE OF THE FOREGOING GUIDANCE.

APPROVE....DISAPPROVE....

8. DRAFTED: NEA/P:GSHERMAN INGERSOLL

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